SIGNAL BUTTE.

By Captain Charles King.

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CHAPTER I.

THE new road from Prescott to the mining settlements along the Santa Anita followed the Sandy for two or three miles above Apache canyon, then, turning abruptly, dove under the turbid waters and reappeared, dripping and bedraggled, on the opposite bank, where it was speedily lost in the thick underbrush as it wound away eastward. Time was when the trail followed the canyon itself—a mere mule path—but ever since the night of the big cloudburst that swelled the stream to the force and fury of a Niagara and drowned old Sanchez and his whole party of prospectors, packers and pack mules, even the Indians seemed to shun it. The only survivor of the tragedy was a lad of twelve, the son of a Yankee miner, and his Mexican wife—a lad whose name was Leon MacNutt (MacNutt being the patronymic and Leon the Christian name given him by his dark-eyed, dark-haired, dark-skinned mother); and Leon, swept away in the flood, was fished out at dawn several miles below by a squad of troopers from old Fort Retribution. The little fellow was more dead than alive, half drowned and sadly battered and bruised by the flotsam and jetsam of the wreck whirled along with him by the raging waters, and for a time all effort to revive him failed. When at last he was able to speak and tell his name he was lying in a dainty little bed in a cool room, with such a gentle, pitying, motherly face bending over him and such soft hands caressing his heavy crop of coal black hair, and beside the sweet womanly face was that of a sturdy Saxon boy of about Leon's own age, whose blue eyes were full of anxiety and sympathetic interest. The first handclasp the little orphan seemed to recognize was this other boy's. It was in answer to his questioning that the bewildered patient feebly murmured his name, Leon MacNutt, and could not at all understand the merriment in the room when his questioner turned with grave, perplexed, incredulous face to the two gentlemen in uniform standing by and wonderingly announced: "He says his name's Lay on MacDuff."

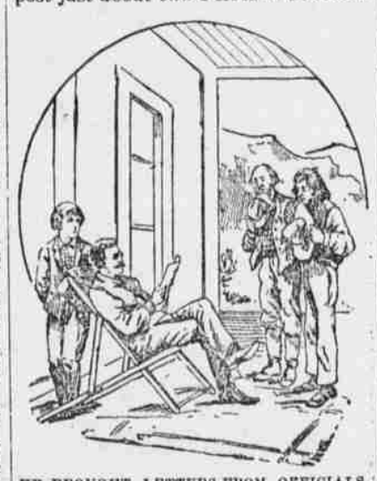
And that was how the first boy of our story came to be hailed thereafter by his trooper friends as MacDuff instead of the patronymic to which he was entitled; even officers and ladies seemed to find the title more whimsically attractive than the pretty Spanish-Mexican name of Leon, by which Mrs. Cullen, the captain's wife and Randall's mother, always addressed him. One of the soldiers once referred to him as the Waif of Apache Canyon, but the big tears that arose to the boy's dark eyes at any reference to the tragedy that left him alone in the world crushed that would-be witticism in the bud. Without adoption, either formal or informal, Leon had become an inmate of Capt. Cullen's household from the moment of his arrival in Sergt. Kelly's arms, and there he lived as Randall's friend, fellow-scholar and playmate for sixteen months, by which time he had forgotten his sorrows and had transferred to his protectors about all the measure of love and gratitude he had ever felt for his own parents.

And then came changes. For nearly a year the boys had roamed together over the neighborhood, hunting and fishing, riding their ponies, living a healthy, active, out-door life except when at their lessons or asleep, and the bond between them had grown stronger and stronger as the days went by. But old Fort Retribution, which was one of the relics of the great war of the rebellion, and had been "located" by the volunteers for temporary occupancy only, was ordered moved from the flats at the southern side of the range over to a plateau several miles to the east. At the same time the regiment to which Leon's kind friends and protectors belonged was ordered eastward after several years of exile, and a new and strange command was to take its place. Captain and Mrs. Cullen had done what they could for their foundling. They fed and clothed, taught and cared for him as they did for their own, because "Randy" had been pining for a playmate, and this little fellow came opportunely into his life. They had furthermore done all that lay in their power to secure for the orphan such property as might have been his father's, but this proved a difficult task. MacNutt had had a partner in his mining ventures, but the partner swore stoutly that Mac hadn't a cent in the world that wasn't swept away in the flood of Apache canyon; he even went so far as to declare that Mac owed him money, and more than once appeared at Retribution when times were hard at the mines saying he thought the officers or somebody ought to pay it because they now had Mac's boy as security. He generally compromised, as he called it, however, with requests to be supplied with bacon, flour, coffee and sugar at commissary prices, which were far less than those at the mines. The soldiers found out that this man, Muncey, by name, was in bad repute among his fellow miners, and openly flouted him when he came among them, but the officers, unable to prove anything, continued to show courtesy to him even though they disliked him.

Capt. Cullen's troop marched away from Retribution in April, '72, just as soon as Capt. Raymond's of the —th cavalry arrived, Mrs. Cullen and Randy in the meantime having been sent away by stage to the Colorado and thence by steamer around to San Francisco. This was long before railroads were known in Arizona. But weeks before the departure of the troop there arrived at the old post a swarthy little fellow from Tucson, who announced himself as a brother of the late Mrs. MacNutt and as Leon's uncle. He had come, he said, to take Leon back to his mother's people in Sonora. He brought letters from officials in Tucson which established his claim and was fortified in his statements by MacNutt's former partner, the malodorous Muncey, who came with him. The officers and the men had no claim upon the boy other than those of friendship and affection. They were his rescuers and supporters—that was all—but Leon was by this time far more American than Mexican, "far more Yank than Greaser," as the men expressed it—and he not only begged and prayed not to be taken from them, but he kicked and scratched and fought like a young bear cub when finally forced away.

Mrs. Cullen and Randy were spared that scene. She had been ailing a little as a result of too long a stay on the flats of old Retribution and had been taken up to the mountain perch of Prescott for change of air while the packing for the move was going on, Randall going with his mother, sorely aggrieved because Leon was not included in the invitation sent by the colonel's wife. Capt. Cullen, probably, was party to the arrangement. He knew they could not keep Leon always, and the longer the stay the harder the parting. Less than a week after Leon's friend and playmate had gone his uncle and partner appeared; less than a fortnight and the poor little fellow was pulled off the buckboard in the dusty streets of Tucson and turned over to a Mexican packer for transportation to Sonora, and less than a month after the Cullens and "C" troop had left the post, haggard, half starved, footsore and in rags, little Leon reappeared at old Retribution almost as utter a stranger as when, half drowned, he was borne thither in Sergt. Kelly's arms eighteen months before.

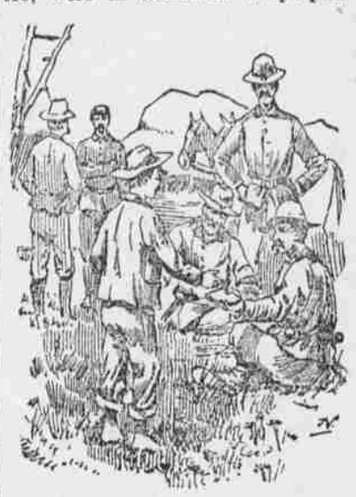
If you had lived a year or more in a certain village and knew every member of every household within four blocks of your home and were to be taken away for a month or so, and returning faint, footsore, hungry and in rags, yet thrilling with hope and joy at the thought of being restored to kind friends and hospitable firesides, only to find everything but the houses changed, you can fancy little Leon's dumb misery as he dragged from door to door along "Officers' Row," meeting only total strangers. He reached the old post just about two o'clock of a scorch-



HE BROUGHT LETTERS FROM OFFICIALS.

ing May afternoon, when everybody was seeking shelter within doors, and the servants who came to answer his timid knock looked askance at the little black-eyed ragamuffin, and could only say that the people he sought were gone. He had turned away with a choking sob from the third door, the big house where the major of the Eleventh cavalry used to live, not knowing whither now to go, and had sunk down upon the steps in utter desolation when he heard through the screen of the open window a childish voice pleading: "It must be Leon, mamma. Do let me call him back." And the next minute a flaxen-haired girl of ten was at his side. Leon never could tell just how it all came about. He remembered trying hard to keep a stiff upper lip and be brave and self-controlled and tell his story calmly and coherently, but he was weak, starved, crushed with the bitterness of his disappointments, and he broke down entirely and sobbed in utter abandonment, and there was no more thought of siesta at Capt. Foster's quarters that afternoon. A pitying, sympathetic group surrounded the boy, Mrs. Foster and her daughter Nellie vying with one another in ministering to his wants, and other kind women coming in from adjoining quarters as the story swiftly went the rounds. It was all over the post in a few hours how little Leon, who used to live here with the Cullens as Randall's playmate and friend, had escaped from the packers in southern Arizona and made his way all those weary, blistering, desert miles, begging a ride in freight wagons, herding mules, trotting along behind the mail buckboard, sometimes tramping all alone, until he reached, at last, the familiar scenes, only to find that his friends were fled.

No hospitality was ever warmer than that of the soldier in those old frontier days. Tramp or vagabond, gypsy, greaser or Indian, it made no difference, even vagrant dogs never knew what it was to be turned away uncheered. The Fosters took the little stranger for the time being, at least, because they knew the Cullens well, and meeting them in San Francisco, had heard Leon's story from their own lips, though never dreaming they were to see him soon. They and the other new families were kind to him as people well could be, and yet, though grateful, it was plain the boy could not be consoled. They were tearing down the frame barracks, and in the midst of the move to the new site—some of the troops being already there encamped—when Leon reappeared, and he watched the process of dismantling with leaden heart. The only real home he had ever known was being ripped to pieces before his very eyes, and he could not bear it. While the new officers and men were strangers to him, there was still at the post his first protector, old Sergt. Kelly, newly appointed ordnance sergeant, and retained there after the departure of his old regiment. There were the hospital steward and his family, and the clerks and employes about the trader's store, as well as the men at the quartermaster's corral; they knew him well, but they, too, were in the midst of prepara-



THE TROOPERS GAVE HIM FOOD.

tion for the move. They were full of sympathy for him and of distrust of Muncey, the ex-partner, and of Manuel Cardoza, the maternal uncle. They believed implicitly Leon's story of his transportation. The boy said that Uncle Manuel had treated him fairly well until they were south of the Gila river, Muncey had left then and gone back to the Santa Anita, after signing and exchanging some papers with Manuel at a ranch on the Auga Fria. Leon could tell little about his journey southward. The driver of the buckboard had made a place for him among the mail sacks, and there he cried himself to sleep at night. But instead of taking him back to Aunt Carmen, of whom his mother had often told him, Uncle Manuel had turned him over to this boss packer at Tucson, and Leon soon found there was something wrong. Instead of taking the southward trail, the pack train was traveling eastward day after day, and he learned presently that they were going to old Fort Crittenden—far over where the Chiricahua Apaches, under Cochise, their famous leader, were then in the height of their bloody work. Mrs. Cullen had taught Randall and him the beautiful constellations in the cloudless Arizona skies, and from the pole star by night and the sun by day he knew they were never going toward Hermosillo—his mother's far Sonora home. Then he overheard talk among the packers that boded ill for him. Manuel had reasons for wanting to "get him out of the way" was all he could make of it, and if he wasn't "lost," as they expressed it, before they reached the Sierra Bonita, he must be "lost" there where it could be laid to Cochise and the Chiricahuas. Terrified, the boy still kept his wits. They passed a wagon train, a quartermaster's "outfit," westward bound, one day, and that evening, soon after dark, he slipped out of camp, and all alone and afoot, took the back track across the desert, and after an all night tramp, caught the train with its soldier escort just as it was starting on the next stage. The troopers gave him food and a place to sleep under the canvas cover of one of the wagons. Leon was carried back to Tucson safely, but from there home to the old post far up to the north was a matter of days and weeks. He had got there at last, worn and weary, but something told him it wouldn't be long before Uncle Manuel and Muncey were after him again, speedily learning that he had returned to his friends instead of being "lost," as the packers might say, among their foes, the Chiricahuas. He warned his soldier friends, old and new, that he would not and dare not return to his uncle's control. The problem, therefore, was what to do with him until Capt. and Mrs. Cullen could be heard from, and the solution came quicker than might have been expected. Senior captain of his regiment when it left Arizona, Cullen was looking forward to promotion to the grade of major within the year, and probably in his own old regiment. But one of those sudden and unlooked for opportunities occurred that are so characteristic of army life. Maj. Wharton of the —th cavalry, the new regiment just reaching Arizona, concluded that he would rather retire with the three-quarters' pay of that grade after thirty years of hard service than go out to the desert and desolate land of Arizona for four years more. Capt. Cullen, promoted major of the —th cavalry, vice Wharton, retired, would soon return to the very station he had so recently left. Leon's best friends were coming back, and Randy wrote in eager delight to tell the news.

This was about mid-June. Blazing hot and dry were the days and breezeless the nights, a most unfavorable time for travel to and fro across the Arizona deserts, but Maj. Cullen was losing not an hour. He was a man who had seen much service among the Apache Indians, knew their haunts and habits, and was both feared and trusted by them. No sooner was the old regiment fairly out of Arizona, and before the new one was fairly in, there flew a hurried dispatch to San Francisco that was flashed on across the Sierras and Rockies and caught the new major at Omaha. In brief words it told him that there was universal uprising among the Apaches and asked how soon he could return, as the general commanding held open for him an important command. In twenty-four hours the reply was at Drum barracks. "Start this morning. Expect me by 25th."

[TO BE CONTINUED.]

SENT AS WRITTEN.

A Story of a Badly Spelled Message Sent by Telegraph.

Several years ago a young man, whom we will call H——, was employed as night operator in a small town in Illinois.

The second night of his services a circus arrived in town and with it a great many farmers from the surrounding country. H—— went on duty at seven o'clock in the evening. About an hour later a stranger came in to send a telegram. As soon as he had written and paid for the message the operator sat down to the instrument and proceeded to tick off the telegram, which was brief, and read, not including address and signature:

"Have sean the party send mee the muney."

When the operator had nearly finished sending the message the receiving operator telegraphed back: "What you givin' us?" referring to the spelling in the message.

The rules of the Western Union company prohibit any conversation on the wire between operators, but nevertheless this rule is frequently broken. It is also a strict rule that messages shall always be sent and words spelled as they are written, even if, as is often the case, the words are spelled wrongly.

But at the time H—— took this job he was as ignorant of these rules as an Indian, so to the operator's query as to what he was "givin' him" he replied thusly: "Make it read: 'Have seen the party, send me the money.'"

"That's more like it," said the receiving operator.

"I guess the bloke that wrote it never saw the inside of a school," said the sending brass pounder.

The next moment he was chilled to the marrow by the soft words that wafted o'er his shoulder:

"Young fellow, that was a cipher message. I am a detective and also an operator. I heard your remarks on the wire, and if you don't send that message the way I wrote it I shall sue your blamed company for fifty thousand dollars. And, further, if you don't take back and apologize for the remarks you made about my schooling I will pound your head off." These words came from the "bloke" that wrote the message.

It is superfluous to add that the apology was forthcoming and the telegram sent again according to the "bloke's" rules for spelling.—Chicago Inter Ocean.

Half-Price.

It is not without cause that the term "hard-headed" has so often been applied to the residents of rural districts in New England. Not long ago a dusty, tired-looking man presented himself at the desk in the one hotel of a New England town, and said he wanted a room till six o'clock the next morning. "I've eat my supper, an' I shall be off before breakfast," he said, gravely, to the clerk. "Now what would be your lowest price for a room to sleep in?" "Fifty cents, if you leave at six o'clock to-morrow morning," was the reply. "Well, now, wouldn't a quarter make it jest about right, then?" said the wayfarer, producing a battered twenty-five-cent piece. "You see I'm all excited up travelin', an' I don't expect to sleep more'n half the time I'm in there!"—Youth's Companion.

A Claim to Fame.

"It was in Perth," says Mr. I. Zangwill, "that, puzzling over a grimy statue, I was accosted by a barefooted newsboy with his raucous cry of 'Hair-r-ald, Glasgow Hair-r-ald!'

"'I'll take one,' quoth I, 'if you'll tell me whose statue that is.'

"'Tis Rabbie Burns,' replied he, on the nail.

"'Thank you,' said I, taking the paper. 'And what did he do to deserve the statue?' My newsboy scratched his head. Perceiving his embarrassment, a party of his friends down the street called out in stentorian chorus: 'Ay, 'tis Rabbie Burns."

"'But what did he do to deserve the statue?' I thundered back. They hung their heads. At last my newsboy recovered himself; his face brightened. 'Well?' said I again, 'what did he do to deserve this statue?'

"'He deed!' answered the intelligent little man."—Household Words.

Hint for Bad-Debt Collectors.

An aged lady complained to a London magistrate that, because she was a little behind with her rent, her landlady followed her to church and asked for it there. The landlady came into the pew, alongside her, and when she was joining in the responses was constantly whispering to her about the rent. When it came to the response, "incline our hearts," the landlady would add: "to pay our rent." The magistrate said it was very annoying, but there was nothing illegal in it.

We All Wonder.

Dolly Swift (thoughtfully)—I wonder—

Sally Gay—What, dear?

Dolly Swift—Why there doesn't seem to be any fun about anything that is strictly proper?—Truth.